

TELEGRAM

OUTGOING AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

POL-23-8

~~SECRET~~

Charge:

Classification

Control: 214

Date: June 22, 1970

ACTION: AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO

INFO: AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

Brasilia 214

SUBJ: Political Impact of Kidnapping

Declassified
Authority: 43265 By:
Amanda Weimer Date:
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1. At core of political problems raised by kidnappings is fact that these events tend to aggravate dissensions in base of this Brazilian government's support, the military-police forces. Segment within the military loosely called the "hardline" is viscerally opposed to any policy which meets terrorist demands. In this gut reaction they receive sympathy and in some cases support of normally middle-of-the-road officers who feel that bargaining with criminals is humiliating.

2. There are number of indications of serious dissatisfaction with Brazil's policy of doing what is necessary to ~~protect~~ ^{protect} life of abducted diplomats and even signs of outright opposition:

a) The pocket revolt of Col. Dickson at the time of the Ambassador Elbrick case.

b) In case of Japanese Consul General and German Ambassador, released prisoners have been transported abroad in chartered

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commercial planes rather than in FAB planes. Embassy is reliably informed that this expensive decision was taken out of respect for sensitivities of FAB officers who did not want to be associated with "humiliation" of giving in to kidnappers.

c) Widespread and serious consideration given among politically conscious and military groups to alternative plans (executing prisoners that kidnappers demand in ransom, announcing GOB will not submit to blackmail in future, automatically executing captured terrorists after their informational value is exhausted, etc.) is indication of continuing dissatisfaction with GOB response.

d) Frequency with which one hears statements

EO50x1

EO50x1

indicating personal disagreement with GOB's policy among officers of military and police forces.

3. One aspect of these abductions is almost unavoidably negative effect on relations between Brazil and country whose diplomat has been captured. This is symptom of delicate issues

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these operations raise within the GOB's base of support. Apparently GOB cannot adopt public position that it is cooperating with government involved without fearing it is giving impression that its actions are responding to outside pressures. Thus there is compulsion, perhaps subconscious, to criticize publically kidnapped diplomats government for real or imagined indiscretions. Problem is complicated by personality of incumbent Foreign Minister.

4. So far GOB has been able to contain the discontent resulting from its adherence to policy of doing everything in its power to prevent the murder of abducted diplomats. In this they have been helped by public support from press and civilian politicians and by elements both civilian and military within government. One of positive ^{point} ~~points~~ of present ^{serve} ~~grows~~ policy is that it ^{LA} ~~text~~ to set Brazil off as more civilized than other ^{LA} ~~text~~ governments such as Argentina and Guatemala. There are, however, indications that to maintain present policy may prove increasingly disruptive in political terms.

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5. There has been rapid inflation of terrorist demands, e.g. from 15 prisoners for Amb. Elbrick to 40 for the German Ambassador. The present policy of GOB encourages this escalation. In addition, ^{very}~~every~~ success of police forces in capturing ^{persons}~~prisoners~~ involved in earlier operations leads terrorists to up the ante in a hope of getting ahead in win-loss reckonings. Yet, logically, this trend leads to price which GOB may feel it cannot afford to pay. In any case, there are clearly prices that no government could afford, yet there is little assurance that terrorists will accurately measure this limit.

6. The terrorists must be increasingly aware of political impact of kidnappings. They have observed negative effects on US-Brazilian and German-Brazilian relations of their operations. The severe deterioration of German-Guatemalan relations and negative affects on Guatemalan international image of the Von Spreti murder are surely not missed by them. Finally, real or imagined contribution of the Aramburu kidnapping in Argentina to subsequent downfall of Ongania government underlines political impact which this type of terrorist action can generate.

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7. In the light of these considerations, possible that some terrorists may shift goal of kidnapping operations from primary one of securing the liberation of fellow terrorists to conscious attempt to exploit political potential of abductions. Several scenarios suggest themselves. Kidnapping of popular general not "in" with the present leaders such as ^{Mattos} Meira ~~MATTOS~~ is one example which could clearly cause severe political effects especially if government followed decision EO50X1 ransom not to ~~ransom~~ anyone but foreign diplomats.

It is not beyond the realm of possibility that series of successful kidnappings orchestrated to maximize political impact could bring down Medici government. Since ~~of~~ one of traditional aims of non-democratic leftwing movements is to polarize political situation, the ~~xxx~~ probability that successor government would be more authoritarian would not be likely to deter terrorists from seeking this goal.

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